

TWIST AND SHOUT

They've been compared to Nirvana and The Beatles. They've been called 'This Year's Strokes'. And they've already had one Top 40 hit.

But **THE VINES** really don't know what all the fuss is about...

THE BBC may well be a national treasure, but 'Auntie' has f**k all idea about what makes great rock 'n' roll. Today, we're in the corporation's famous White City HQ for the sanitised spectacle that is 'Later... With Jools Holland', the respectable face of music television. Today, Stereophonics' Kelly Jones plays an acoustic reading of 'Billy Davey's Daughter', Del Amitri croon about heart-break with a string section and host Holland joins Badly Drawn Boy for some tinkling schmaltz from the soundtrack to Hugh Grant's new film 'About A Boy'. It's every middle class 30-something's musical wet dream come to life. How very nice.

And then four young Australians in tight fitting T-shirts are given their cue by the floor manager. A squall of feedback splits the air, a snare drum spits forth an angry tattoo and we're pitched headlong into a raging blast of rasping attitude pop, all raw-throated angst and rough and tumble guitars. It's like Nirvana trying to get through The Beatles' entire Star Club set in under two minutes, and as the skinny-ass frontman crashes to the studio floor while wrenching out a brutally concise solo, it's most definitely 'a moment'. This is The Vines. This is their next single, 'Get Free'. And this is f**king awesome.

current UK hit 'Highly Evolved' – they're being tipped as the band of 2002, this year's The Strokes. As a result, their two-week stay in London has been a whirlwind of promotional activity; tonight's 'Later...' performance comes on the heels of two radio sessions, appearances on 'cd:uk' and 'Top Of The Pops', three London shows in six days, and interviews with every media outlet in the city. For Nicholls – a shag-haired, baby-faced skate-kid who loves Nirvana and The Beatles in equal measure – the past few days have been "pretty frenzied", and in truth he looks f**ked today: his pale skin bears the ravages of too much fast food and too many late nights. But, despite the fact that most of his answers tail off with the tired, distracted words, 'Sorry, what were you asking?' or 'What was I saying?', he's understandably enthused about the buzz surrounding his band.

"It's an exciting time," he admits, "not just for us but for bands like The White Stripes and The Strokes too, I guess. The band succeeding to me is just about having great songs and having the freedom to play whatever we want to play. I can only write the music, everything else is out of my hands. It's cool that people like us, but I can't get too caught up in what other people say."

WHAT PEOPLE are saying is that The Vines – completed by Patrick Matthews (bass), Ryan Griffiths (guitar) and Hamish Rosser (drums) and named after Nicholls' father's '60s garage band The Vynes – are going to be massive.

You only have to hear the pinpoint power of 'Highly Evolved' or the woozy psychedelic charm of its B-side 'Sunchild' – to understand why. Yeah, we know there's a new 'Next Big Thing' along every month, but it's impossible to argue with The Vines' irresistible energy and ability to distill five decades of rock 'n' roll history into feral, visceral slices of perfectly judged guitar pop. And despite Craig Nicholls' humble protestations that he "doesn't really have anything to say", the charismatic, puppy-dog-cute singer is just tailor-made for rock 'n' roll superstardom.

"I'm just going on instinct," he says with the nonchalant ease of a true Aussie beach bum. "My dad said just to have fun and we're doing that." Tomorrow The Vines fly back to LA to tidy up artwork details for their eagerly awaited debut album. The prospect is daunting for Nicholls, who hates flying and almost got arrested on the inbound flight for leaving his seat to throw up in the toilet as the plane touched down. But he knows that it's all part of the job of being an international rock band, and he's bullish about the band's prospects for the year ahead.

"We want to take this band as far as it can go," he says simply. "I think the album shows what we're capable of right now, but we're just starting out. It's going to get more exciting still." ●

THE VINES' single, 'Highly Evolved', is out now on Heavenly.

"It's overwhelming that people should compare us to Nirvana. But we're not trying to be them..." **CRAIG NICHOLLS**

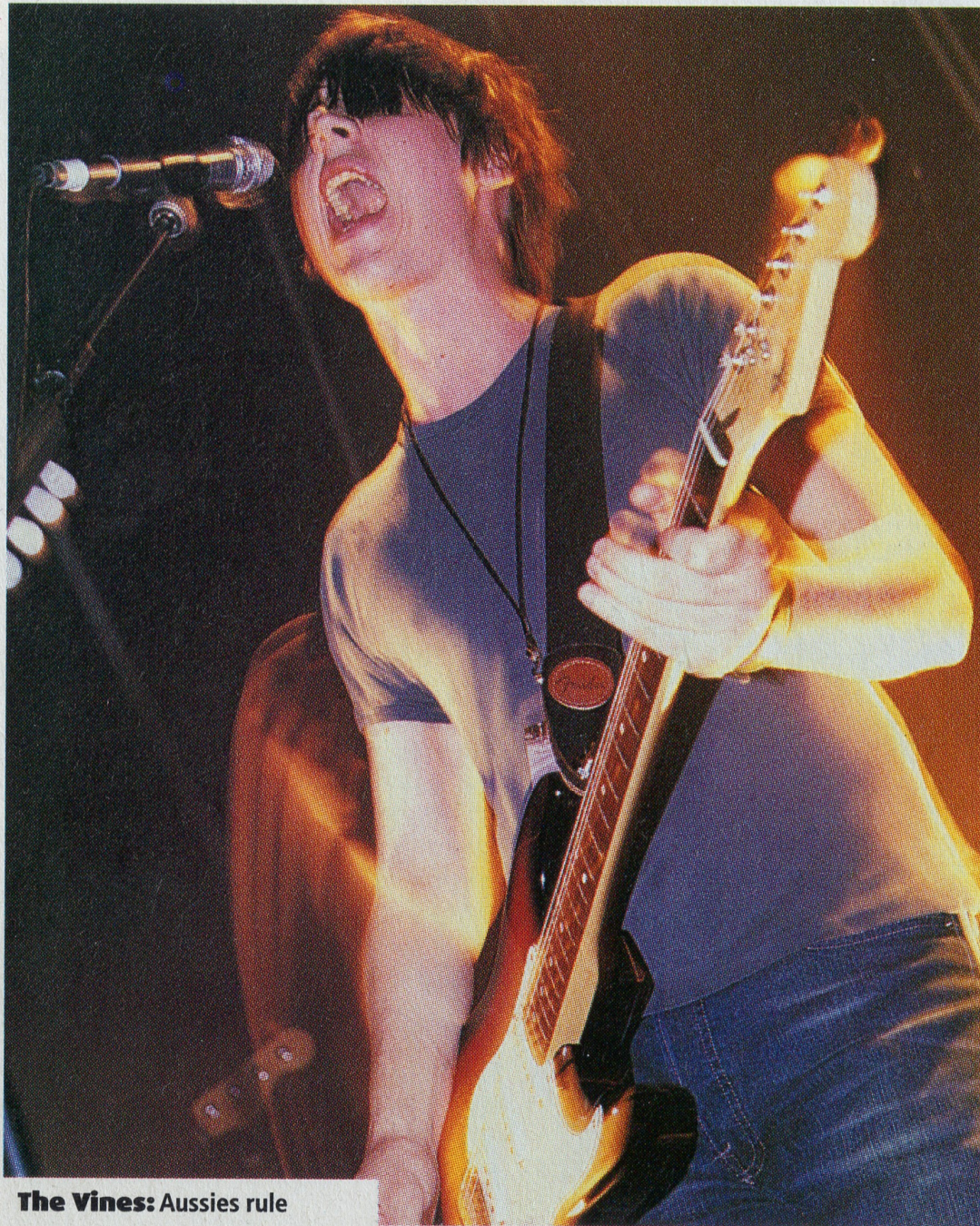
"IT'S OVERWHELMING that people should compare us to Nirvana, because they were amazing," frontman Craig Nicholls insists as he sips water before the taping in a London hotel. "We are hugely influenced by them, but we're not trying to be the new Nirvana. I think with this band we can do everything."

New Nirvana or not, The Vines could not be any hotter right now. On the strength of just two singles – last year's low-key 'Factory' and all 93 squealing seconds of their

The Vines: from left – Hamish Rosser, Patrick Matthews, Craig Nicholls, Ryan Griffiths

Aussie Rules: A rough guide to The Vines...





The Vines: Aussies rule

PHOTO: PAUL HARRIES

The Vines **ULU London** **Wednesday, April 10**

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Australian quintet live up to their 'next big thing' tag at cool-as-fk capital show.**

YOU'VE GOT to feel a little bit sorry for The Vines. After releasing just one single and playing a handful of gigs, they've already been touted by fashion mags and desperados as being 'The Australian Strokes' and "the perfect synthesis between The Beatles and Nirvana" ... You can't help but feel that the poor fellas have got a lot to live up to.

Tonight's gig at ULU is jam-packed – model types squeeze lithe frames to the front while music industry big wigs blow hot air knowingly. And by the time The Vines shuffle onto the stage it seems evident that they've already been stylised, pouffed and preened into their current skinny, Stokes-style threads, making their first gloriously scruffy appearance at Camden's Monarch in March seem like a millennia ago. But then the music starts and any such cynical notions fly out the window.

The Vines chop and change from

countrified space rock to Pixies-style screamadelica of the finest order – and it's mesmerising stuff for sure. Starting speed-freak, Stooges fast before becoming doped-up and mellow, this is bipolar music that f**ks with your head but leaves you wanting for more. A beautiful, swelling, intensely romantic melody wells up in the guise of 'Country Yard' and frontman Craig Nichols' caterpillar green eyes roll into the back of his head, his tongue lolls out and he's singing from somewhere over the rainbow. Then, from out of nowhere, the guitars kick in and current single 'Highly Evolved' turns on some of the sexiest full throttle garage-rock to ever shoot through 1.54 minutes. The music hacks weep into their student price Stellas and the steamy mosh-pit resembles a shearing pen in the Australian outback, the punters scrabbling over the gawping fashionistas like a pack of puppies riding on the backs of nervous sheep.

This is the real deal. And even if The Vines don't quite live up to the 'better than Nirvana' hype tonight, you get the feeling that, given a bit of breathing space, they sure as hell could do soon.

EMILY RAYNER